

Message Text

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47

ACTION AF-06

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----- 122333

R 011119Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9516

INFO AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

C O N F I D E N T I A L OUAGADOUGOU 1021

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, ML, UV

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH FRENCH AMBASSADOR

1. IN LONG CONVERSATION APRIL 28, FRENCH AMBASSADOR BLANC WAS EXTREMELY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT CHANCES FOR PEACEFUL SOLUTION OF MALI/UPPER VOLTA BORDER DISPUTE AND FOR SURVIVAL OF LAMIZANA REGIME. FOLLOWING ARE HIGHLIGHTS OF HIS REMARKS.

2. LAMIZANA REGIME: PRESIDENT LAMIZANA HAS BEEN GREATLY WEAKENED BY CEAO SUMMIT MEETING IN NIAMEY. HE IS NOW BEING CRITICIZED OPENLY BY MEMBERS OF HIS ENTOURAGE. AT A RECENT CABINET MEETING, WITH LAMIZANA IN THE CHAIR, SEVERAL MINISTERS EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT IT WAS TIME FOR LAMIZANA TO RESIGN. WHEN HIS OLD FRIENDS(MINISTER OF DEFENSE BABA SY, MINISTER OF INTERIOR BILA ZAGRE, MINISTER OF JUSTICE BONDE), FAILED TO COME TO HIS DEFENSE, LAMIZANA REPORTEDLY STATED THAT HE WAS READY TO STEP DOWN BUT FELT IT WOULD BE BAD FOR COUNTRY IF HE WERE TO DO SO BEFORE BORDER DISPUTE WITH MALI HAD BEEN
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SETTLED. BLANC COMMENTED THAT IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO

FIND A SUCCESSOR FOR LAMIZANA AND THAT NOONE SEEMED TO HAVE GIVEN THIS MATTER SERIOUS THOUGHT. HE WAS OF OPINION THAT WHOEVER REPLACED LAMIZANA WOULD BE FAR MORE DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH ON BORDER DISPUTE.

3. ARMS BUILD-UP: VOLTAN ARMY HAS NOW REACHED ITS TARGET OF 6,000 MEN. ARMS CONTINUE TO COME IN MOSTLY BY AIR BUT VOLTANS ARE VERY DISCREET ABOUT IT. FRENCH HAVE NO HARD INFORMATION TYPES AND NUMBERS BUT THEY ASSUME THAT ALL ARMS PURCHASED IN FRANCE HAVE BEEN DELIVERED (COMMENT: WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO CONFIRM THAT AIRLIFT OF FRENCH ARMORED CARS BY SATURN AIRWAYS (STATE 080634) HAS BEEN COMPLETED ALTHOUGH SEVERAL PLANES HAVE BEEN REPORTED TO HAVE LANDED AT NIGHT DURING MONTH OF APRIL. END COMMENT). MORALE AMONG VOLTAN VETERANS OF ALGERIAN WAR WHO HAVE BEEN RECALLED WAS EXCELLENT AT BEGINNING BUT IS NOW DETERIORATING. MOST OF THESE MEN ARE 35 OR 40 YEARS OLD, AND ALTHOUGH GENERALLY WELL TRAINED, THEY ARE NOT IN BEST OF PHYSICAL CONDITION. THEY ARE ALL MARRIED AND HAVE CHILDREN AND ARE BEGINNING TO GRUMBLE BECUASE NOTHING IS HAPPENING AT THE FRONT. THERE IS DANGER THAT INDIVIDUAL UNITS IN THE SAHEL WILL TAKE MATTERS INTO THEIR OWN HANDS AND ENGAGE MALIAN PATROLS WITHOUT INSTRUCTIONS FROM OUAGA. MEANWHILE MALIAN ARMY HAS BEEN BUILT UP TO MORE THAN 8,000 MEN AND SAME PROBLEMS ARE DEVELOPING AMONG MALIAN TROOPS. MALI IS REPORTEDLY WAITING FOR SOME KIND OF PROVOCATION FROM VOLTAN ARMY WHICH WILL GIVE MALIAN ARMED FORCES THE JUSTIFICATION THEY NEED FOR A MARCH ON BOBO-DOULASSO. INSPITE OF TWO VOLTAN BATTALIONS DEFENDING BOBO REGION, FRENCH BELIEVE THAT MALIANS COULD BE IN BOBO-DOULASSO WITHIN A MATTER OF HOURS.

4. TREATMENT OF MALIAN NATIONALS: FROM REPORTS FILTERING IN THROUGH FRENCH MISSIONARIES AND TECHNICIANS IN BOBO-DOULASSO REGION, AMBASSADOR BLANC HAS GOTTEN FAIRLY ACCURATE PICTURE OF WHAT HAPPENED LAST DECEMBER. HARRASSMENT OF MALIANS WAS APPARENTLY FAR WORSE THAN WE HAD BEEN LED TO BELIEVE. BLANC CALCULATED THAT AT LEAST 80 AND PROBABLY AS MANY AS 100 MALIAN NATIONALS WERE KILLED IN BOBO, BANFORA AND ORODARA AND MORE THAN 200 WERE SERIOUSLY

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WOUNDED BEFORE VOLTAN ARMY WAS ABLE TO REESTABLISH ORDER. THIS IS BAD ENOUGH, BUT STORIES REACHING BAMAKO APPARENTLY TOLD OF THOUSANDS BEING KILLED. THIS EXPLAINS VARIOUS REPORTS FRENCH HAVE RECEIVED TO THE EFFECT THAT MALIAN ARMY IS JUST ITCHING TO MARCH ON BOBO-DOULASSO.

5. LOME MEDIATION COMMISSION: FRENCH AMBASSADOR DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT ANYTHING WILL COME OF LOME MEDIATION COMMISSION.

MILITARY SUB-COMMISSION WAS TAKEN ON "GUIDED" TOUR OF CONTESTED AREA BY MALIAN OFFICIALS AND, ALTHOUGH THEY DID NOT SEE ANY MALIAN MILITARY ACTIVITIES, MEMBERS OF SUB-COMMISSION COMPLAINED THAT THEY HAD NOT BEEN GIVEN FREE ACCESS TO THE AREA AND THEY CAME BACK CONVINCED THAT MALIAN PATROLS ARE STILL OPERATING IN CONTESTED ZONE. MEANWHILE, LEGAL SUB-COMMISSION IS JUST MARKING TIME. AFTER STUDYING MAPS AND DOCUMENTS, ALL MEMBERS ARE CONVINCED THAT CONTESTED AREA BELONGS TO UPPER VOLTA BUT NO ONE WILL HAVE THE GUTS TO SAY SO PUBLICLY.

6. COMMENT: OVER PAST FEW DAYS, I HAVE HAD OCCASION TO SPEAK INFORMALLY WITH SEVERAL VOLTAN MINISTERS AND I HAVE FOUND THEM TO BE QUITE RELAXED. THEY CERTAINLY DID NOT GIVE ME THE IMPRESSION THAT THE LAMIZANA REGIME WAS ABOUT TO COLLAPSE OR THAT THEY EXPECTED A MALIAN INVASION. FRG AMBASSADOR VERGAU HAS JUST HAD A VISIT OF HIS VICE MINISTER OF COOPERATION AND HAD MANY CONTACTS ON THIS OCCASION WITH PRESIDENT LAMIZANA AND OTHER MINISTERS. HE ALSO FOUND THEM ALL QUITE RELAXED AND, ALTHOUGH HE HAS HEARD FROM FRENCH AMBASSADOR REMARKS SIMILAR TO THOSE REPORTED IN PRECEDING PARAGRAPHS, HE IS INCLINED TO TREAT THEM AS OVERLY PESSIMISTIC. WE BOTH HAVE TO ADMIT, HOWEVER, THAT BLANC HAS SOURCES OF INFORMATION WITH WHICH WE SIMPLY CANNOT COMPETE AND WE THEREFORE CANNOT DISCOUNT WHAT HE HAS TO SAY.
GRAHAM

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